Sehnsucht

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/20781974.

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning: Major Character Death
Category: F/F
Fandom: Once Upon a Time (TV), swan queen - Fandom
Relationship: Evil Queen | Regina Mills/Emma Swan
Character: Evil Queen | Regina Mills, Emma Swan, Red Riding Hood | Ruby, Snow White | Mary Margaret Blanchard, Prince Charming | David Nolan, Wicked Witch of the West | Zelena, Queen of Hearts | Cora
Additional Tags: Teenage Drama, Young Love, True Love, Heavy Angst, Grief/Mourning, Heartbreaking, Everything is Beautiful and Everything Hurts
Stats: Published: 2019-09-26 Words: 10221

Sehnsucht

by glowparrilla, reginswan

Summary

Regina Mills found love in adolescence and that’s when she met Emma Swan. From then on, they lived happily for a few years. Regina had always been fully focused on her studies; her impeccable manners were somewhat a great reason for Emma to make fun of her. Emma, on the other hand, had a very different lifestyle from Regina. Their differences were accommodating slowly with time until they found a balance point. However, a sad, dreadful day for both of them arrived: Mills had to leave for another country; the news destroyed the fairy tale the girls were living for the time being. Years later, when Regina returns, everything is not the same. It’s quite the opposite.

Notes

First of all, thanks to Sarah (@glowparrilla) for translating this story for me and not complaining about it. You're awesome!

Originally, I wrote this story in Portuguese almost 3 years ago and I've always wanted to post it, but my English is too "basic" for that hahaha so I asked for help!

This is a very special story to me and I hope it turns special for those who read it too.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.
“Sehnsucht is a German noun translated as “longing”, “pining”, “yearning” or “craving”. Some psychologists use the word Sehnsucht to represent thoughts and feelings about all facets of life that are unfinished or imperfect, paired with a yearning for ideal alternative experiences.” — Wikipedia.

---

Hamburg, Germany — 2017

Sehnsucht was the word that defined Regina’s current reality. She spent a few years living in Germany — in Hamburg, to be precise — and always admired the unique streets of that beautiful city. She was almost turning 16 years old when she left New York, promising herself that she would never come back — not even when her mother was hospitalized for a few weeks or the birth of her niece, Robbie.

The truth is that Regina became a different woman after crossing the ocean.

Her current residence was very well located in the city — just a few blocks from Ohlsdorf Park, where she loved to spend the whole Sunday playing with her son. Yes, she has a son. Henry, her little prince, who was about to complete 10 years old in a few months, had been the consequence of a night of sorrow and too much whiskey that happened the day after her graduation. A random boy called Robin approached her to soothe her heart that night and used her vulnerability and drunken state to his privilege. With the pregnancy, Regina feared for her son's livelihood. How much could a newly graduated law student make with no experience? How much was enough when she had to live in a city where the living cost was extremely high? Despite that, Regina’s family was wealthy, but when she decided to live thousands of miles away from them, her expenses would have to be paid on her own. Her mother sometimes tried to intervene. However, the boy's father said it wasn't their responsibility to keep or even take care of little Henry. Robin got himself in a lot of debt, and his parents almost went bankrupt. Now, they weren’t as wealthy as before, but either way, none of them was willing to give any money to Regina or Henry, especially because they viewed her as ‘a girl who didn't know how to protect herself.’ And the idea of asking the Locksley’s for money never went through her head. She didn’t need them or anyone else.

The River Grill Bar was her favorite restaurant. It was located on the street of her house, Fuhlsbüttler Street. She always suspected that her subconscious chose that residence for the proximity of the place. Tortellini à La carte was always her order. Henry loved Cevapcici — not denying he was born in Germany. The environment of the restaurant had a charm that reminded Regina of the best years of her life. It was at Bubby’s, in New York, that Regina met Emma Swan, the girl who changed her story, and left a scar — not just in her life. With that thought, she passes her long fingers through the scar on her right upper lip covered in crimson lipstick. The blonde and her friends always thought it was ridiculous for a teenager to order a Cobb Salad when the others increased their cholesterol with Bubby’s burger — the combo of french fries and a huge burger with lots of bad condiments in it, hence the name of the place.

Emma was a blond girl with beautiful green, emerald eyes that always got in trouble with her friends, in the same place, during the late afternoons. They went to Stuyvesant High School together, but they weren’t a part of the same group. Swan was the bad girl who vandalized the school and Mills was the very nice girl who didn't bother leaving the library to have a social life. A combination that, under Mills’ pragmatic gaze, had a very high probability of ending in tragedy.
Emma was sitting in the living room waiting for Regina to get ready. Cora and Zelena had probably left invisible circular marks on the pale floor for walking so much back and forth. There was just one hour left to celebrate the New Year, and Regina was making them wait almost the same time.

“Emma, here’s some money for the cab. Zelena and I will go ahead. You stay and see if you can hurry this girl up,” Cora said as Zelena brought her hands to the sky, silently thanking her mother’s decision.

After they left, Emma went quickly to Regina's bedroom. Even after months together, she still felt somewhat uncomfortable while staying in this place of the house. As she entered the bedroom, she found Regina sitting peacefully on the armchair by her bed with a book in her hand.

“Baby girl, it's almost midnight. It's the turn of the millennium. Quit reading just for a little bit, please? Leave the Mills side and come to the Swan’s side,” Emma said playfully as she tried to get Regina out of the house to enjoy this legendary moment together.

Mills looked up at her — the intenseness of those beautiful, bright chocolate eyes making Emma feel giddy all of a sudden. “Who would have thought that Emma Swan, the rebellious blonde, would be at Regina Mills' house calling her ‘baby girl’? I wouldn’t.” Regina smirked at her and that softened all of Emma’s worries. “You know how much I love when you call me that, don’t you, my darling? But there are only two pages left, and I couldn't leave without knowing what happens with Kat and Jeff. It's very important. Don't be insensitive.” She pouted like a baby on purpose, knowing that Emma couldn't resist when she did that.

“I'm not insensitive, Gina,” she retorted, her features showing false outrage.

“I know you aren’t.” Regina blew a kiss the blonde’s way, then perched her glasses on her nose properly to continue reading.

Almost five minutes later, the brunette finally closed the book. Emma had been observing her this whole time and realized that the desired ending for the book probably didn’t happen since Regina’s calm and happy expression had turned into sadness. But that would be something to talk about later.

“Can we go now, baby girl?” She emphasized the nickname, causing Regina to laugh wholeheartedly at her. That sound was beautiful. She loved it so much.

The brunette rose from the armchair and calmly stood in front of the bookcase to retrieve the finished book when Emma walked towards her and wrapped her arms around a slim waist as her lips started kissing Regina’s shoulder and neck.

“Emma, dear, weren't you in a hurry?” She turned her head to face the emerald eyes that sparkled with happiness.

“The idea of us being alone is so wonderful,” Emma said, cupping her cheek to bring their lips together. “But we have to go now because a beautiful night awaits us.”

“What have I done to deserve someone so amazing like you?” Regina kissed her this time, only in the sweetest way only she knew how to. It caused butterflies to appear in Emma’s stomach every time Regina kissed her like that. “You must have some brain problem to like me this much, don’t you, Swan?”
“My only problem is that I love you too much. Shall we go?” She intertwined her fingers with Regina’s. “Oh! I almost forgot,” she exclaimed as she searched for that special item in her pocket.

Emma placed the small item covered in gift paper in Regina’s hand, and she was not surprised when the brunette stared at her with suspicion deep in her dark, brown eyes. After she undid the gift paper, she immediately laughed at what was inside: a red lipstick. Emma loved when Regina wore red lipstick; she looked so majestic, but the brunette often thought she looked a bit vulgar as well.

“Please, put it on. Your scar looks even sexier with the bright colour.” Regina shot her a glare. Ooops. The ‘story of the scar’ was kind of a forbidden topic for the brunette. “When are you going to forgive me for that harmless cut? How would I know that mixing potassium with water would cause an explosion?”

Regina rolled her eyes at her. “Paying attention to class! I can only forgive you because you also have one on your eyebrow. It’s quite sexy, too.” She brings her hand to Emma’s face, touching the eyebrow scar slowly as both of them recalled the accident that happened at the science lab a few months ago.

“But we really have to go, baby girl. Your mother is probably having a fit by now.”

Hamburg, Germany — 2017

It was almost 11 pm and today was the kind of days that Regina really tried to keep her full focus on work. She didn't want to leave room for nostalgia and moments of longing replaying in her head. It had been exactly fifteen years since she left New York and she was never, ever, able to take Emma out of her head. Well, she never really tried as much as she should have.

For a while, Regina imagined that the memories of her old, innocent love would dissipate over the years, but it didn’t and that was a huge disappointment. When she looked at the young students of the university, she remembered the sunny days she lived by Emma’s side. What would life be like today if she had let Emma be a part of it? She could picture several versions of that dream.

Stupid tears rolled down on her face without permission. She was trying to control the pain, but how could she? How could she find strength in something that hurts her soul; that makes her suffer? They had promised each other a very important thing: the distance.

Would it be easier to maintain a romantic relationship with all the technology there is today? Maybe it would, but at the time, all that was available were letters, and maybe some phone or video calls. Neither of them deserved that — unfinished stories that were never going to be finished. Regina would never put Emma in that position.

Emma would probably move on with her life. She wouldn't be stuck in the past, or maybe she did. The letters she sent to Regina in that period should mean something, right? Regina had never opened them, though. She couldn't. Emma, even from a great distance, would break the brunette’s heart in pieces without even knowing.

Sometimes Regina thought about coming back... but how? How could she give up on her dreams? What if she went back to New York and received an icy glare from her beloved one? Or worse — was ignored. Thus, for fifteen years, Regina chose to live a fantasy of love than having to face reality and suffer; suffer more than she has already suffered.
Fifteen years ago…

“Hey, baby girl! How was the inauguration?”

“Perfect, my darling, perfect!” She smiled so brightly that happiness sparkled in her beautiful brown eyes. “The place is so wonderful, so modern,” she commented excitedly, then threw herself in Swan’s arms, embracing her tightly.

“Wow, you really liked it, huh?” Emma laughed at Regina’s euphoria.

“Yes! I can’t wait to study there,” the brunette said, looking dreamy.

“Study where? In Germany?” Swan asked, feeling slightly baffled by the surprising news.

“I’m going to send in my application, of course. No favouritism, but yes, I want to graduate in that university.”

“Wow, I... I didn't know those were your plans... I mean, Germany is... far, right?” Emma’s voice had turned shallow and she seemed a bit anxious now.

“Emma, I...” Regina started, noticing her girlfriend’s reaction. “We're going to fix this distance thing. And as I said, I'm only going to send in my application. There’s nothing certain yet and we still have a lot of time for us.”

Well, there had never been any way things could work out, after all.

California, USA — 2016

Emma was about to start the vacation she had always wished for. She had discovered a week ago that the insistent headache was not just for crying every single night. There were so many projects in her life. She had almost gotten into a serious relationship with a younger girl, Lily, whom she met in college. But it didn't work. After Emma realized — too late — that Regina would probably never come back, she decided she also needed to move on.

Sitting on the sand of the Californian beach, Emma thought about everything that happened: her life with the most beautiful brunette with the darkest, brown eyes. Her desire to have her theatre. The thousands of times she fantasized about Regina coming back to her — that only caused her sadness because Regina would never come back. Now she was sure of it.

The bitterest reminder of her thoughts was the time Emma had luckily been invited to act in a play in the so-dreamed Broadway. She had reserved a front-row chair for Regina but the seat was only occupied by sorrow and longing.

“Hey, sweetie, don't pull that sad face right now. It's Regina, isn't it?” Her friend Ruby asked, always knowing right away what she was feeling.

“It’s always been her and it always will be,” she said quietly, feeling her green eyes water as pain conquered her poor heart. “But this suffering will end one day. It can’t last forever, right?”

“I’m really hoping it won’t, Emms.” Ruby pulled her closer in a side hug. “I will always be by your side, though. I’m your best friend and I’m with you for the long haul, I swear.” The brunette winked at Emma, who laughed out loud.
Emma rested her head on her friend's shoulder as the latter started caressing her blonde curls. Together, they admired the beautiful sunset.

**New York, EUA — 2000**

At 00:15 am of the New Year of 2000, fireworks still could be seen in the sky that some people were still lightening to celebrate this great night. Emma had invited Regina over to her house, but the brunette still couldn’t believe how Emma’s parents were able to leave a 15-year-old teenager alone at home. They went to spend New Year’s in Chicago. Emma, being rebellious as always, said that she wanted to stay in New York to spend it with Regina. Mary and David agreed and told her to take care of herself.

“There is a bottle of Champagne Moet & Chandon Dom Perignon 1961 waiting for us in the fridge.”

“Emma, I’m only sixteen years old. I can’t drink alcohol,” Regina reprehended her.

“But Regina, this was the official champagne of Princess Diana and Prince Charles’ wedding. It will be served at our wedding too, so take this as a drink tasting, all right?”

“Drink tasting? For our wedding?” She asked, completely surprised by Emma’s idea. “You are crazy, Swan. We’re not old enough to think about that. My worries right now switch between my grades and the book chapters you always stop me from reading.”

“You are too systematic, baby. We’ll need some time to decide it all, so I already started on the preparations,” the blonde said thoughtfully. “And don’t worry because I’ll pay for the honeymoon.” She winked at Regina who blushed immediately.

“Emma!” She reprehended her again.

The taxi driver pulled over in front of Emma’s building. The blonde pulled some dollars from her wallet and handed it to the driver, telling him that he could keep the change. He smiled gratefully at them and sped away. Soon, they were entering the fancy penthouse Emma lived in.

“Your parents give you too much freedom. That’s why you act like this.” Emma rolled her eyes at her uptight girlfriend. “How can David allow you to stay alone in town with alcohol in the house?”

“I told him I would be with you,” she said sweetly, grabbing the champagne bottle from the fridge along with two wine glasses from the cabinet.

“My girlfriend is a liar,” Regina said to herself, but Emma heard her.

“Technically, that was not a lie. We're together now, aren’t we?”

Before Regina could answer, the sound of the bottle opening echoed through the silent room. Emma poured their glasses with champagne and handed one to Regina.

“Now, about the alcohol issue: my parents only allow me to drink during New Year’s. And when I say they allow me, it’s because I asked my dad if I could open one to celebrate this year with his special bottle. He said, ‘You are not old enough to drink, yet Perignon 61 is the nectar of the heavens.’ It’s like he allowed me, you know?”
Regina only laughed at Emma’s father attitude, which reminded her of her father, who had unfortunately passed a year ago. Henry always gave her everything she wanted. He had met the Swan family, but he didn’t get to know them for too long. But the love and affection they shared with Regina were remarkable for him, even though he disagreed with certain rules of parenting they had on Emma — the blonde had freedom, much more than Regina’s older sister, Zelena.

Between one sip and another, they talked about random things, something that was new in Regina’s life: talking about nothing at all. Emma loved to mix subjects; the connections made between one context and other left Mills questioning just how clever Swan was. She was clever, of course, but she didn’t show as much.

“Ah, the thing about this ‘freedom’ I have now is quite recent. Thanks to you, my parents are more chill now. Before, I could have been escorted by the police at any time. Now, my biggest crime is to say bullshit about Jane Austen’s books.” A glare was shot her way at that. “Since the day they saw my hair without any colours of the rainbow; jeans not ripped; a single-tone cashmere blouse, and neutral-coloured boots, they began to love you right away.”

"You dressed like that on our first date,” Regina commented with a smile. “I always thought your invitation was more of a prank on me."

"And why did you accept it?" Emma drank another sip of her champagne as well as Regina.

“I was curious to know how far bullying and cruelty would go,” Regina said sullenly.

"I would never go that far, Regina. I’ve never done anything like that to you.” The brunette’s lips twitched in a small, cynical smile, causing Emma to continue, "Okay, I used to make fun of your peculiar tastes of the last century standards, but given the location of your residence, everything was clear to my eyes.” Regina rolled her eyes and downed the rest of the champagne left in her glass. “From the day I heard a girl ordering a Cobb Salad at a fast-food diner, many things have changed. I liked that girl.” Emma smiled sheepishly, her cheeks turning about fifteen shades of red. "Maybe you were everything you did not have the guts to be.”

“What didn’t I have the guts to be? A healthy girl?” Regina bit her lower lip to hide her mocking smile. So beautiful, Emma thought as she stared with longing at the brunette.

Swan also drank the rest of her champagne and put it next to the modern couch when she was finished. She dragged her body closer to Regina’s side on the couch, and cupped her face gently, using the tips of her fingers to touch Regina’s temples, sliding down every contour of her face until it reached her chin. She tugged her chin until their lips met, both still cool because of the drink and the cold air from outside. Their mouths moved slowly; the taste of champagne softening the sweet encounter of their tongues.

Without breaking the contact, Emma removed the crystal glass from Regina’s hands and put it somewhere on the floor. Her hands longed to discover more of Regina. Slowly, she glided them over Regina’s knee, her thighs… The brunette knew where they would reach, so she pulled away from Swan. She was panting; her breath coming hot and heavy against Emma’s lips.

“"You know I’ve never done that,” she said quietly, her voice almost broken due to the kiss.

“We never did that, so do not forget that we are in the same boat of lack of experience,” Emma said, trying to ease the tension in the air.
“Two drunk, inexperienced girls giving themselves to the pleasures of the flesh. Does that sound right?” The apprehensive brunette said.

"The part of the pleasure of the flesh sounds pretty good to me.” That finally caused a smile to form on Regina’s red, plump lips.

She cupped Regina's face in her palms once more, taking in every detail so she could remember this girl forever in her mind and heart. Regina Mills was the most stunning girl Emma had ever seen.

Emma started placing chaste kisses on Regina's shoulder, tickling her olive skin with her lips as she watched the brunette’s eyes close and her breathing intensified by Emma's simple touch. The younger girl stopped her caresses and stood up, holding out her hand to the brunette. The latter took it without hesitation, stepping as close to Emma as she could. Emma didn’t wait any other second before starting a provoking kiss that left Regina weak in the knees. There was the knowing need for air, so they mutually stopped. Then, Emma started pulling Regina towards her bedroom.

After the door was opened, Regina only scrutinized the bedroom she had never set her foot in before. She knew that Emma had no interest in tidying up her stuff, but what she saw right now wasn’t exactly so bad; not the chaos she was expecting. And with that, she realized that her girlfriend didn’t have any expectations for tonight. Otherwise, her bedroom would at least be a bit better organized. But the whole room was just the way Emma is: a mess.

Emma started removing some pieces of clothing around the room with no hurry. They had all the time in the world right now. The phases of discovery were always respected; their timid eyes exchanged consent in silence, almost like telepathy. Regina laid on the bed of messy sheets and smelled Emma’s good-scented perfume. It smelled like Emma's skin; like spring flowers.

Emma hovered over her with a sweet smile on her face. The blonde's curious hands started their slow discovery around every inch of Regina's body, tracing her fingertips on her olive skin as each piece of clothing were being removed. They savoured passionate and languid kisses, getting to know each other’s taste and at the same time, how good it felt to be kissed by someone you love so deeply. At one point, Emma had to untangle her body from Regina’s only to contemplate how beautiful her nudity was. Flashing a grin at the brunette, Emma leaned in once more to kiss her with as much passion as she could muster.

The fact that they were both giving themselves to each other felt magical. Even with fears and insecurities, there was no other moment more magical and amazing than this one.

Emma made Regina hers as she entered two fingers inside of her and was completely hypnotized when Regina moaned in pleasure. Regina's body was certainly responsive to Emma and she wanted to find all those little places on her body that just made her squirm and squeal in delight and pleasure. There was no doubt that she wanted to spend every single day of her life making Regina happy.

Their bodies were moving in sync, both already covered by a thin layer of sweat. Choked breaths, gasps, and moans were being expressed freely by each of them. Pleasure took over them, together and united in a way they've never been before.

The moon’s brightness shone in Emma’s bedroom giving a touch of autumn to the environment, even if winter reigned beyond those walls. The moonlight over Regina's left side was glowing on her curves, on her beautiful olive skin. Her eyes were filled with tenderness that Emma could all but contemplate with a smile, leaning in to place chaste kisses on plump lips and her beautiful scar that looked almost imperceptible now, but which would carry so many memories.
"I will always love you, baby girl."

"I will always love you, my darling."

Hamburg, Germany — 2015

Regina came home around 7 pm that night and found the house completely silent. Her son always welcomed her by wrapping his arms around her legs and saying that he had missed her so much.

“Henry? Where are you, dear?”

Regina did not get answers, so she quickly walked around the house in haste looking for Henry. She found him in her bedroom, fiddling with the wooden box she kept under her bed. Mills narrowed her eyes as she approached the curious boy.

"Henry! What are you doing?"

He instantly pulled his hands away from the box, looking guilty as he stared at his mother, “I was just looking for glue, Mommy.” Regina swallowed hard when she some familiar photos splayed on the floor haphazardly. Henry followed where her eyes were looking and quickly asked, “Who is that pretty girl with you on the photo?”

Fighting back stupid tears, Regina quickly moved into action to put all the stuff back into the wooden box and push it back under the bed, making up some excuse about that photo to her son as she led him out of her bedroom. Later that night, when they had already eaten dinner and Henry was sound asleep in bed, Regina finally returned to her bedroom and pulled out the wooden box again.

There were many memories of Emma in there that she could never send it away. There were four letters and only one was opened, but she never dared to read it. The envelopes were all yellow, so she imagined that Emma had bought all of them at once, but only four had arrived for her.

Inside the box, there was the book that Emma gave her as a gift, and also a withered white rose — completely lifeless and thin like paper; similar to what her life had become. That well-known longing feeling took over her as she gazed wistfully at the white rose — Emma’s favourite.

The red lipstick that she had worn in New Year’s was also in there. Emma always made sure to tell her how beautiful she was when she wore that reddish color.

Regina’s favorite perfume was in there too. Emma had bought it for her; the blonde had made sure to buy a perfume bottle just after it was released, knowing Regina really wanted to have one of those. That perfume had cost the blonde three months of her allowance. Mary had gotten livid over her daughter’s attitude. David had found it super romantic.

There was also the necklace Emma had given her the day she asked her to go steady; it happened at the Gym class. Ruby cheered for her friend, but some others looked weird at Emma for doing asking that right in the middle of class, and also… well, their sexuality. There is still prejudice nowadays, now imagine back then.

Every memory taken from the box unleashed bitter memories in her mouth. The last few years, she had never heard any news from Emma — except when Zelena told her that Swan was the orator of her graduation class — and that was something unexpected. Regina had chosen not to keep in touch
with Emma because she knew that if they started talking, she would cry and be a mess listening to any words from her ex-girlfriend. So, she never wanted to be close again — never had the courage to read the words written in those letters, or re-read the story of that book, or use the red lipstick in that shade, or feel the essence of that perfume again, or see how beautiful and majestic that necklace looked around her neck.

Mills kept in the deepest part of her heart the girl she'd left with her eyes full of tears at the airport thirteen years ago.

In order not to let the temptation speak louder, she put everything away, then returned the box to under the bed; the place where it should never have left.

---

**Philadelphia, USA — 2001**

“Are you sure there was no better place for us to stay in, Emma?” Mills questioned by examining the facilities in the pamphlet Ruby had given her. "It doesn’t look very hygienic. It even looks like my sister's bedroom. Ugh, Zelena makes our house look like a huge trashcan.” She sighed dramatically loud, then continued, "I do not like it.”

“You live in a historic building with nineteenth-century architecture in the West Village, and still complains about life,” Emma saidironically. “This is one of the best hotels in Philadelphia, Regina.”

“Oh, says the girl who lives in the most expensive apartment on the Upper West Side.” The brunette raised her hands as if to prove a point.

"The value of your house is worth my entire building, Regina. Shut up.” Emma stopped at the traffic light and looked at Mills.

"Ah, the audacity of these New Yorkers!” Ruby exclaims from the back seat. “I grew up in the Queens suburb eating junk food on the Triple Crown and I look happier than you.” Ruby continued, putting her head between the front seats to look at the two stubborn girls.

“Poor wolf girl! She spent her childhood eating the best burgers on earth," Swan said sarcastically, running a hand over Ruby’s hair playfully. The redhead looked up at her in disapproval.

“I've never been to the Triple Crown,” Regina said thoughtfully. "Will you take me there one day, Emma?"

"You only eat green things, baby girl. It's a crime to go to the Triple Crown and order a broccoli salad," Emma said cheerfully as she blew up a kiss on her girlfriend’s direction.

“I want to visit the place, not feed my stomach with fat food. If you won’t take me, I'll go by myself,” the brunette said grumpily, crossing her arms over her chest like a typical spoiled girl.

Emma rolled her eyes at her girlfriend’s behaviour. “Can we stop? This is our trip. The last one before we give our souls to university. We have to enjoy it as much as we can!” Emma said, looking a bit downcast now.

Ruby returned to her position on the back seat as the traffic lights turned green.

“I’m excited to know what my proposals are,” Regina said, leaning her elbow on the car window
and resting her head on the backrest.

"I think all the US universities would lick your feet for you to study in their facility, baby girl," the blonde said with a smile, caressing the brunette's knee with her free hand. "I only applied to the universities of New York. I can't imagine my life outside of this city."

Regina swallowed harshly, wondering if she were accepted in the university she had always dreamed of — the one in Germany —, their days together were on countdown. What would their relationship be like if she had to move to Germany? Would it survive the long-distance? Regina closed her eyes with sadness, swallowing what would be the inevitable conclusion if she was accepted.

Bucerius Law is the largest private university in Germany. It had been her father's dream for many years to found a university; and yes, he and some other friends had achieved their dreams. Bucerius Law was founded only a year ago. And even though it was easier for the daughter of one of the founders to get a vacancy spot, Regina insisted on going through all the legal procedures. The dream of the existence of the educational center was told during some cold afternoons that young Regina shared with her father, Henry Mills. He was born in Hamburg and always wished that his city would have a modern and respected space of education for its residents. That reminded her of sad memories: what everyone thought it was just a cold Henry Mills had gotten, suddenly it became pneumonia, and then he was dead. Holding back tears, Regina tried to be strong at the moment, feeling her heart clench in pain inside her chest.

Henry Mills never saw his dream come true, though. But Regina would represent him. Leopold, brother of Henry Mills, did not let his dream die along with him in that hospital bed. With every ounce of effort, Bucerius Law University exists today.

“Hey, Regina? Do you have any news about that university of your dreams, Bucerius Law or something?” Ruby asked.

“It’s Bucerius,” Regina corrected the redhead automatically, regretting a second after when the vibe in the car turned heavy.

That topic was kind of forbidden between Emma and Regina. There had been a series of conversations, sometimes arguments, about Regina’s possibility of going to another continent. Swan respected her girlfriend’s dreams, but both were to face a fireproof: the so-called long-distance.

“No,” Regina answered Ruby after a few seconds. “No answers yet,” she said, unable of stopping her eyes from glancing at Swan. The blonde’s usual happy eyes now looked sad, and Regina didn’t blame her for that.

The ineluctable day was approaching by each passing hour. However, none of them wanted that day to come. Now, there was something else to focus on: the next four days of vacation with their friends.

When they arrived at the hotel, Regina’s critical eye passed all over the place. Everything was perfectly sanitized and she was quite relieved. Emma and Regina were going to share one room while Ruby would share with another girl. Every graduating student decided to come on this trip.

When Emma entered their bedroom, she kept herself quiet as she took off her shoes, lied down on the bed, resting her head on her arms. Observing the attitude, Mills realized that her girlfriend was upset about the ‘forbidden topic’ being said in the car.
"Hey, don’t make that face," Regina said sadly, leaving her things on the table to sit down on the edge of the bed. "Ruby didn’t know how much this topic affects us. Let’s just… enjoy the next few days, okay?"

"Is it a farewell already?" Emma asks with bitterness, although her eyes are inscrutable.

"No, Emma. It’s like… like a honeymoon," the brunette responded, giving the blonde a small smirk as she moved to straddle her girlfriends’ waist on the bed.

A shy smile formed on Emma's thin lips. “I like that idea.”

“You like anything that involves the two of us naked, you pervert.” Regina slapped Emma playfully on the shoulder.

“You were the one who mentioned sex,” the blonde said, a grin forming on her lips. Emma sat on the bed, embracing Regina's waist as an affectionate kiss started.

Their kisses turned heated instantly as hands rediscovered sweet spots to touch.

Forgetting the previous disagreement, Regina realized that this was a very good way to start their vacation.

Hamburg, Germany — 2017

Regina came home feeling completely drained and physically exhausted. There was only one week before class started, and everything in the university looked like chaos. The first thing she did was to go to little Henry's bedroom; the boy was sleeping like an angel tucked in his bed. Regina ran her fingers through his thin, brunette hair — just like hers. Her hand slid down the boy’s face where she placed a chaste kiss and whispered him goodnight. She exited the bedroom slowly not to wake him up, leaving the door slightly ajar so that a beam of light entered the room. Henry did not like to sleep in complete darkness, just like his mother.

"What time did he sleep?" She asked Granny, the babysitter. The old lady was packing her things on the counter, ready to end another day of work.

“A few hours ago,” she said, draping her handbag over her shoulders. "There's a new package for you, Miss Mills. It’s in your office," Granny said before leaving with a wave of goodbye.

"Thank you, Granny. See you tomorrow."

Guided by curiosity, Regina walked to her office, looking for the new package. As she passed the door, she saw that it was a brown box, just like the ones Emma used to send to her. She froze on her step, swallowing the harshness in her throat before continuing to move, now close enough to the box so she could read what it was written on the top:

Emma Nolan Swan — West Village, New York, USA

Open it, please. It's very important.

Regina held the box for several minutes, unable to bring herself to open it as she just stared fixedly at the box. Swan had never sent a note like that in her previous letters. Why was this one very important?
She walked up to her chair in an almost robotic way as if she was carrying an atomic bomb in her hands. She sat down slowly, putting the object back on the office desk. Regina slowly ripped off the protection, opening the paper lid a few minutes later only to find a DVD in a clear acrylic package, with only one note: **Watch this, please. It's very important.**

What was this DVD about? Why was Emma trying to emphasize its importance?

Regina turned on her computer and, as she placed the DVD in the cradle, she imagined a thousand different things in her head about why it was so important. When the first image appeared on the screen, Regina froze completely; her heart sinking in her chest instantly. A lump formed in her throat, stopping her from breathing for long seconds.

It was not possible, her eyes had to be betraying her.

But no, they were not. It was Emma Swan there, on the screen. Yet, it was not the cheerful, blonde girl Regina had met years ago; the frozen image in front of her was terrifying. Swan was definitely in a hospital room; that was clear. There was a flowery scarf covering the blonde’s head that also covered her temples. Emma was thin, very thin. **Painfully** thin.

Regina took her trembling icy fingers to the mouse and pressed play, feeling the abundant fear in her stiff body as she realized that the content of this video would not be nice. It would knock her out, but this time she could not deny the request. After all, it was very important.

"In today's video, I'm going to teach you how to be ignored for the love of your life for fifteen years. It's simple: have an ex-girlfriend named Regina Mills."

Emma chuckled, trying to make a joke out of her own misery. But Regina couldn’t laugh, obviously not. She was still in shock, unable to believe that this was her blonde, her lover.

"Well, Regina, if you're watching this video, I'm sure I'll be gone by then. If you ever read my letters, you will not be much surprised." Emma took a deep breath, her eyes watering as she stared fully at the camera. “I waited for your visit, you know? Every time the door to my room was opened, I imagined a brunette, now short-haired, smiling with compassion or, perhaps, even with hollow eyes.” Emma smiled weakly as she continued, her voice a bit more playful now, “Can you believe my mom shaved her head just to make me feel better? I guess she thinks I'm a fashionista now.”

Regina still couldn’t laugh. She was staring mouth agape at the image on the screen, wondering how the hell that had happened to Emma; her Emma. Did she… did she really die? Despair gripped her body as she began to tremble. She couldn’t breathe.

"I can hardly stay without this hideous mask now and I almost have no healthy lung tissue. The doctors wanted to intubate me, but I didn’t want it. If you came here one day, I wanted to see you, but that didn’t happen. I had five months left, but it was suddenly reduced to a few weeks. Now, at most, a few more days. So, I wanted to leave you one last message."

No. This can’t be true. No, no, no, no!

Tears were wetting her face, dropping slowly on the computer keyboard as she stared unblinkingly at the screen. It was hard to believe that this was happening. It was hard to watch.

"There has not been a day in all these years that did not think of you. Well, except when I was in a coma,” the blonde shrugged nonchalantly as if the mention of a coma didn’t even matter. “Anyway, I will no longer love you on this earth, but I’ll love you in heaven; or in any other place,
whether there is life after death. It would be really ironic because I don’t even have a life on earth.” She gestured with her weak hands, frowning at the camera for a few seconds before a weak smile formed on her thin, pale lips. “I’ll always love you, baby girl. Take care of yourself,” Emma said, at last, bringing the oxygen mask to her face again, her breathing deep and laboured as she asked someone to turn off the camera for her. But before that happened, Regina watched as Emma tried to lay down with extreme difficulty on the bed; everyone could see that the blonde had no strength left. Her weak appearance broke Regina’s heart into dust.

When the screen went black, Mills realized the obvious: Emma was dead.

Emma was dead, gone, forever.

Her dark eyes welled up and tears streaked down her face, her lips trembling until she bit them and put her head down to lay on the computer. Waves of pain washed over her as her body convulsed to meet each one. Emma was gone; her light consumed by death’s empty darkness. All Regina had left of her was the fading image of a weak Emma in her mind, beaten up by fucking cancer.

The grief came in waves and threatened to consume her entirely as she let out tears and more tears. The awful hollowness, the waves of wretchedness threatened to engulf her mind, body, and soul. Her heart was as barren as the moors on a desolate winter morn.

Everything had fallen apart. How could she live now that she knew the love of her life was no longer on this earth? And she was too self-centred to revoke her stupid decision to lose touch with Emma for pure fear of being too close again; of hurting herself more. But this? Death? What could hurt more than death? What could hurt more than not being there, when Emma needed her support? What could hurt more than being unable to hold and kiss Emma one Last time? Regina is, indeed, the most selfish person in the world.

Finding strength out of nowhere, Regina got up quickly, running to her bedroom to get the box where she kept the memories from Emma. She dropped every single thing on her bed, grabbed the package of letters and pressed them to her chest tightly, letting the unstoppable tears roll down her cheeks as she felt her heart break in tiny little pieces. Regina blamed herself for everything she did not do; for every selfish decision she made; for being stupid enough to push Emma away.

She opened the first letter with trembling fingers:

New York, April 25, 2002

Regina,

Before you go crazy thinking it’s absurd that I have your address, I want you to know that I can be quite persuasive. But I guess you already know that. Zelena didn’t resist for long. I just wish to hear from you. I thought it would be easy to live without you, but the ‘living part’ is almost gone. I know, I know... I’ve always been the cliche one in our relationship, but it’s your fault! I was very good at being a bad girl, okay? Then you showed up with that beautiful smile and charisma that my heart burst out from my chest and I became this hopeless and foolish romantic. I tried to move on with our agreement, but I love you too much to give up. Send me news of you. I love you, baby girl.

Emma Swan
Grief had surely taken over her body and mind for the loss of her love, but she couldn’t help but smile as she read those sweet words written so sloppily in the only way Emma knew how. Swan always demonstrated her love in all the ways she could. It was one of her amazing traits that Regina loved the most.

She opened the second letter:

New York, November 29, 2006

Regina,

I live in a great illusion that you never received my first letter. If this happened, I inform you that there was, in fact, a letter. My heart prefers to believe that was the reason for you not to write back. Anyway, this new letter is just to say that I am now a graduate in Performing Arts, and who would believe that, eh? My project to open the field for poor children into the theatre is now a success. I remember one of the afternoons in Central Park that I fantasized about it, and you said, ‘Fight for it. For a dream to happen, you just need to take the first step.’ I’ve taken that step, thinking of you. The children are so cute! You’d love to meet them. Do you remember that abandoned theatre on W 26th St? Close to the South Playground? Well, I bought it, and today it’s a huge theatre center and it’s called UCB Theatre. I hope one day to be on Broadway, and I get myself deeper in the illusion that you’ll be sitting on the front row to watch me. Send me news, please? I love you, baby girl.

PS: Search for my first letter behind a table or something. Perhaps it will be there. Sorry, I’m watching too many romantic movies.

Emma Swan

Now, Regina was crying with pride. Emma had dreamed so much of this project, and she had finally accomplished it.

The third letter was opened:

New York, September 9, 2010

Regina,

This is a letter just to congratulate you on your success because I still believe the other letters got lost on the way. What a thrill it is to write to the new Rector of Bucerius Law. It was always your dream, right? Congratulations! Wherever your father is, I bet he is as proud as I am. You deserve all the good things in the world; you’re the smartest girl I’ve ever known.

Well, do not think I’m a stalker, okay? Ruby also attended Law School and ended up receiving this information, so she shared it with me. I thought I’d stop contacting you, but I can’t. I swear I can’t. Whenever I walk the streets of this chaotic city of New York, the memories of a sweet girl with black hair, three or four books loaded against her chest takes my mind, and it invades me in such a way that my eyes start watering as I imagine you there with me again. If you get this letter, please answer me? Zelena still insists on absolute silence. I love you, baby girl.
More than eight years had passed and Swan's feelings remained firm and strong. Regina swore to heaven that she had been so stupid, selfish, and weak. Emma was always sweet, and the brunette offered her nothing but bitterness.

New York, March 22, 2013

Regina,

How do I start this letter after so many years? Today I realized why you did not answer any of my letters. It is sad to know that you received all of them but paid no importance to any. Maybe what you felt for me was never love; I was just a pastime of your teenage years, right?

I saw you today in Germany and decided to end the agreement between the two of us. I could not live another day without having you. But when I got to your house — and I got your new address because Cora was at my house when you called and told me where your new residence was. Remember that she said she would pass the phone on to someone else to write it because the name was too complicated? That person was me. I saw you standing there beautifully, and looking very different. As I was getting out of the cab, I saw a little boy running towards you, and he looked so cute, by the way. But when he shouted, "Mommy, Mommy! I missed you so much!" My heart broke. You really moved on without me. Can you believe the fool I was? I travelled thousands of miles to be able to see with my eyes how happy you are without me. Of course, I also had my romantic flings because I am not a nun. But a son? That was a step far beyond what I had imagined. I believe you're married now, happy. I was just really struck by all this information. Neither Zelena or Cora mentioned it a wedding or a child. I thought it was their decision not to share, but today I doubt it was just them; you probably told them to stay shut.

Anyway, I just got to the airport to get back from where I should never have left. I already have enough news from you.

PS: I always said that red lipstick fits perfectly on you.

PS²: You shorter hair as well.

The pain she was feeling at reading Emma’s words was indescribable. She had never felt this way; she could tell that her heart was breaking in tiny million pieces, but there was also a burning deep in her chest, making it difficult for her to breathe.

Emma had met Henry when Regina never thought she would. The blonde had understood everything wrong, and that realization hit her like a freight train.

The last letter:

New York, October 2, 2016
Regina,

After so many attempts at approaching you again, this will be the last, I promise. I can already imagine you with all your new pose, rolling your eyes and saying, 'Why? Are you going to die now?' Well, if you thought that, you got it right. No, I'm not dying because I miss you, even if you take a piece of me every day; but it's brain cancer, actually. Do you remember when you said that I could only have a problem with my head because I liked you so much? Voilà! It's a tumor. You always got it right. Anyway, even with all the jokes, the cancer thing is serious, okay? Stage four with metastases throughout my body. The doctor said that, luckily, I still have five months left. I've been in the hospital for a few months and I can’t leave anymore. I would definitely return to Germany to see you again if I could. I never thought that the ‘goodbye’ we said to each other at the airport 14 years ago was, in fact, the last one.

Anyway, I won’t bore you anymore. I just have one last request for you. Please, come back? At least for a few minutes, I really want to see you again. I want to see the glow of your eyes; feel the warm touch of your hands; smell the sweet fragrance of your perfume. It sounds so selfish, doesn’t it? But I only have a little time left, so I’m definitely using this letter to my advantage... No one else knows of my deplorable health state; only my parents, Ruby, and now you. Everyone else thinks I'm on vacation in Italy, but well... I guarantee you that there's not much European atmosphere in this hospital room. This oxygen balloon is not very attractive.

I haven’t had any news about your life for a while; actually, rarely until I was courageous enough to go to Germany and see you for myself. Zelena and your mother are silent like a damn grave, ha! Jokes about death are one of my favorites now.

Anyway, I hope your last visit is not on my grave when you're 80 years old. I really want to see you in person. Send us news if possible. I still love you, baby girl. I'll always love you.

Emma Swan

At the end of the last letter, Regina was sure that her heart was not beating against her own chest. She couldn’t breathe, she couldn’t... couldn’t believe what she had done. How could she have deprived herself of living beside the woman she loved with all her soul, even after years without seeing her? How could she be so fucking selfish and arrogant? How could she pretend that a love like that would have subsided after they said goodbye years ago?

As unstoppable tears wet her face, Regina grabbed all the letters and photos and laid on the bed as she embraced the items, letting the sadness and grief take over her body and soul for once and for all.

New York, USA — 2002

“Emma, please, don’t cry. This is hurting both of us.”

They were hugging in the middle of the airport. Everyone around looked at them probably not understanding their despair. Regina hugged Emma tighter in her arms, wishing they could stay like that forever. They've worn themselves out so much these last few weeks. Since it was announced the day Regina would leave, they both stayed together the majority of their time.
Emma used the last weeks to rake Regina out to the places they’ve shared their best memories in their relationship; almost four years together. They went to Buddy’s, Central Park, Jefferson’s Library. Their old high school backyard that the blonde always dragged Regina to make out during the breaks.

Those were all amazing memories never to be forgotten.

“My darling,” Regina leaned back to stare into her lover's eyes. “Nothing we’ve lived will be forgotten. I promise you I’ll always remember every single moment we’ve spent together. What we’re going through right now is really difficult, but I'm trying to be strong for both of us. I love you, and since the first day I saw you I knew you would cause me problems. And it did cause me problems, but not in a bad way, though.”

Emma’s eyes were closed as she listened attentively to every tone in Regina's voice. It wasn’t hard to understand what Regina meant with that speech. Today was the end of everything for them.

“Are you okay with our deal?”

Emma opened her eyes to face brown orbs, swallowing down her sadness to say, “We will not keep in touch, each one will move on with their life, leaving destiny to choose our fate,” Emma punctuated everything that had been talked about between them these past few weeks. "It's the best thing to do, even if it's so painful to say goodbye." Emma took a deep breath before continuing, “This right here,” she pointed a finger between them. “it's not a ‘see you soon’. We don’t have to pretend that it is. Be happy with your new life, Regina. I'll try to do the same.”

The last call for Regina’s flight was announced. The two of them embraced each other so tightly; their hearts beating so intensely that they both could feel it against each other’s chest. Once, they had the world in their hands such was the happiness and love they felt for each other. Now, it felt like everything was falling apart.

Reluctantly, Regina was the first to let go. With her lips trembling and tears wetting her cheeks, Mills placed a chaste kiss on Emma's lips. Their bodies untangled completely while only their fingers remained interlocked. As Regina started walking away, their fingers started losing the contact slowly.

"I will always love you, my darling,” Regina said, at last.

Emma smiled even though her eyes were dripping with tears.

"I will always love you, baby girl.”

Their hands finally dropped, losing the last contact.

New York, USA — 2017

“It's here,” Regina read the name on the headstone, wishing that all that covered her eyesight was just one of the many nightmares she had had. "I'll wait in the car. Take your time.”

Walking away, Zelena left Regina alone with the grave of the only woman she has ever loved. The one who shared her teenage years; her first, in everything — one and only. Regina was completely frozen as she stared at the beautiful name ‘Emma Swan’ written on the headstone along with: ‘Beloved daughter and friend’.
A single tear trickled down the outer corner of her eye, doing the curve of her cheek. The pain not only tore at her chest; her soul was also in pieces. She didn't remember any other moment she had ever found herself so vulnerable, weak, helpless. During her father's death, maybe. But she stood beside Henry until his last breath.

Regina's pain was a mixture of loss and abandonment, feelings caused by herself only — she had been so focused on having the life she wanted that she left behind the woman who she had always loved. And now she could no longer hear Emma’s pleas for forgiveness; could never hear her voice again.

Looking at the impeccable white rose in her hand, a movie of their story played in her head. The memories of everything they’ve lived passed through her mind, however, two moments were prevalent.

The first look.

The last goodbye.

Her knees went to the ground, sinking into the earth. The grass was not firm enough, causing a hole to form beneath her knees, bruising the soft flesh. Her heart was similar to that hole right now because it felt like a part of her life had died. And it did.

Emma Swan is dead.

Her trembling fingers traced the name that was craved on her lover’s grave. She rested the single white rose gently beside it.

Her haggard body could not bear its weight anymore as it collided with the ugly grass. It didn't matter if the earth would cause a stain to her expensive clothes bought at a designer store on the Europa Passage. This is what she is now: a regretful, guilty and selfish woman who had chosen a life that was not beside her only love, and all for what? She should have revoked their deal; she should have come back to New York to see Emma again; she should have read her letters, for God’s sake.

Now, Emma is gone, dead, and Regina never got the chance to tell her she loved her one last time. She didn’t get to hold her close before she slipped away. She never even got to look into her loving, beautiful face once again, which always brought her so much happiness and love.

The grief surged with every expelled breath, always reaching higher peaks, never sufficiently soothed by her long intakes of the damp spring air. Tears continued to spill from her helpless eyes onto the newly growing grass. At that moment, the sure knowledge that life would go on without Emma brought emptiness into her heart, the numbness pounding her brain, the salty tears that flowed unchecked from her eyes, the sheer nothingness that now took hold of her soul threatened to engulf her entirely. Her legs buckled, knees sinking even more into the sodden earth as she watched the casket lowered to its final resting place.

The maintenance man walked by and observed the scene: a woman lying on the ground of a cemetery, stricken with tears and supplications, "Come back to me” was all he could understand from the babbling words. That scene was not new to his eyes, but if there is one thing he has learned in nearly 30 years, it is dealing with the feeling of departure. He bowed his head and thought, “Yes, ma'am, death comes tragically no matter how it is announced. It will pass, one day it will stop bleeding.”

The wind hit Regina's face, barely able to dry her tears as it couldn’t stop dropping from her eyes;
instead, it just made it colder. Her black hair was dirty with the brown earth and the grass. Her body was contorted like one of a child in her mother’s womb; it had been in that position for a long time — countless minutes. Her body no longer had strength as she sobbed her pain out, feeling her heart break, again and again, knowing this pain, this *guilt* was never going to leave her.

Again the wind came by, but this time, it was inexplicably hot. The feeling of being held by Emma was inevitable. Emma is dead, but she will always live inside Regina; inside her fragile heart, inside her memories — forever.

Regina closed her eyes and remembered Emma’s last words in the video:

> “I'll always love you, baby girl.”

> “I’ll always love you too, my darling.”

> At last, she said.

End Notes

So... I hope you liked it, even though it was extremely hard for me to write something like that and for the translator to translate it, believe me.

I cried, and she cried, the people who read in Portuguese also cried. It's hard, I know, but still... I hope you take this story to your heart because it brings an important message: never give up on what you really desire, but remember that you’ll always have a choice, but, regardless, there will be consequences.

Let me know what you think! It’ll make me very happy!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!